

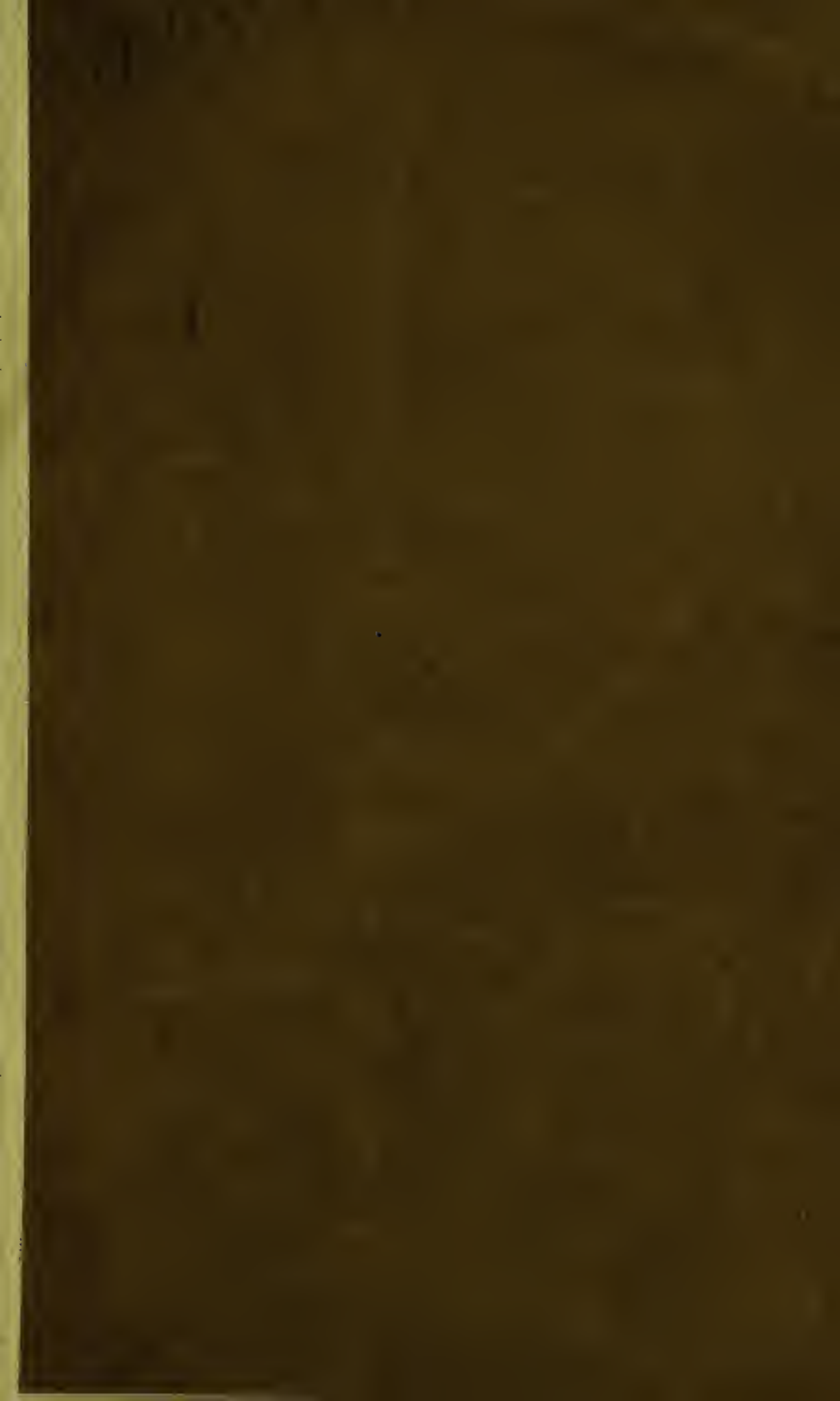
[BLANE, G.]:

A serious address...1811.



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By
[SIR GILBERT BLANE]



From the Author

A

SERIOUS ADDRESS

TO

THE PUBLIC

ON THE

Practice of Vaccination;

IN WHICH THE

LATE FAILURE OF THAT OPERATION

IN

THE FAMILY OF EARL GROSVENOR

IS PARTICULARLY ADVERTED TO.

SOLD FOR THE BENEFIT OF
THE PORTUGUESE SUFFERERS.

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1811.



SERIOUS ADDRESS, &c.

THE Small-pox is a disorder, which for a thousand years has been by far the most destructive epidemic with which the human species has been afflicted. It is difficult to say why a greater horror is annexed in our language, sentiments, and practice,* to the name of Plague, than to that of Small-pox, for the latter has swept off a hundred times more victims than the former. It is true the Plague carried off 70,000 in one year the last time it visited this metropolis, whereas the annual average of deaths from Small-pox, last century, was little more than 2000. But, on the other hand, we have had no Plague for 146 years, in which time there must have perished 293,000

* It is remarkable, that while the most rigorous penal laws have been enacted in this country respecting the Plague, there is not a single act of parliament, nor even regulation of police, respecting Small-pox, so that society is left at the mercy of the ignorant, the careless, and the sordid.

by Small-pox, according to the Bills of Mortality, which do not comprehend, by far, the whole population of this metropolis. When it is farther considered, that there are large portions of the most populous parts of the globe in which the Plague has never been known, and some climates and seasons are even unsusceptible of it; that in the greater number of places it's ravages have been short and transient, and at long intervals, and that the largest quarter of the globe, commonly called the New World, has never yet felt this scourge; it appears a trifling evil in comparison of the Small-pox, from the unceasing havock of which, no kindred nation is exempt. In order to impress an adequate idea of the magnitude of this evil, it is needless here to dwell on the agonizing sufferings of the victims, carried off in the most interesting season of life, and the heart-rending affliction of the surviving relatives; for though we have witnessed, of late, an incredible degree of apathy and indifference to these calamities, the great bulk of mankind must have known them from their observation, or felt them in their experience.

There was a period in which any proposal for extirpating, or even mitigating, this evil, would have been regarded as either the idle dream of a wrong-headed enthusiast, or the crude conceit of some presumptuous fool. In the course, how-

ever, of the last century, two means of relief for this grievous evil have been proposed and adopted.

The first aimed only at mitigation, consisting in inoculating with the disease itself those who had not already caught it; and this having been proved, beyond all doubt, to render the disease less dangerous and severe than when communicated by casual infection, it was therefore gradually adopted, and became very general in the upper ranks of society. It never was so general, however, in the great mass of the population, as to diminish the mortality. On the contrary, it has been clearly proved by Dr. Heberden, that after the introduction of inoculation the total mortality increased; for, by an examination of the Bills of Mortality, it appeared, that before the year 1720* the average deaths from the Small-pox was 70 in 1000; whereas towards the end of the century it was 95 in 1000; that is, nearly one tenth of the whole mortality. This evidently arose from inoculation destroying more than it saved, by spreading it to places which would otherwise have escaped; for formerly it was not unusual for whole districts to be free from Small-pox for 30 or 40 years, or more, so that many lived and died without ever catching it.

* It was in this year that Inoculation was introduced by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu.

This expedient, therefore, of inoculating the Small-pox from itself, may fairly be said to have failed; for the just estimate of it's value must depend on the general result of it's effect on the whole species, and not on the benefit conferred on a small portion of it.

Let us see whether the other, which aimed at nothing less than extirpation, has succeeded any better.

The boldness and novelty of such a pretension made it, at first, be rejected by many, who would not even deign to examine it's merits. That a morbid poison taken from a domestic animal should have the effect of destroying the susceptibility to Small-pox, without producing any dangerous* disorder itself, was considered by all

* There are grounds to believe, amounting almost to demonstration, that the Vaccine Inoculation even prevents dangerous disorders. Suppose there are a thousand children all in good health on a given day; two, three, or more of them, will, in the common rate of things, be affected in the course of the next two or three weeks, with some disorder more or less severe. Suppose farther, that another thousand children, in similar circumstances, had been vaccinated on the same day; two, three, or more of these also ought to be more or less affected by illness some time in the following two or three weeks; and, in the very great numbers that have undergone Vaccination, this illness must, in very many instances, from mere casual coincidence, have been a mortal one, and would naturally be placed to the account of the inoculation. But, as we have not heard of such

the world, enlightened and unenlightened, either as an extravagant fancy, or, at least, as a proposition to be entertained with the utmost hesitation and caution. The light of evidence, however, broke in so rapidly, that the truth of this fact, so highly curious as a new discovery in the history of animal life, and infinitely interesting, as it affects the dearest interests of humanity, was fully established to the satisfaction of every one who had the means and the capacity of appreciating the evidence in it's favour; for examples of the preventive virtue of the Vaccine Inoculation occurred in the circle of every one's friends and acquaintance, so as to leave no doubt in their minds of the fact. The merit of the gentleman who first drew this discovery from the fruitless obscurity of rural tradition, and rendered it available to mankind, was greatly enhanced by his perseverance under such discouragement.

In the mean-time doubts were started concerning the duration and extent of this prevention; objections which could have no weight

accidents, which could not have failed to have been noticed, considering the great vigilance of the Anti-vaccinists, it follows that none such have occurred. The inference is, that there is something in the influence of the vaccine matter, when acting on the constitution, which supplants approaching illnesses.—An opinion prevails both in Ceylon and Mexico, that Vaccination prevents and cures several disorders,

but in so far as they militated against the ultimate benefit held out to mankind ; namely, the extirpation of the Small-pox. We may affirm, that though the Cow-pox should be found not to prove a security for life in every instance, and though it shall be found, that in one case in a hundred, nay, one in ten, it should fail in destroying susceptibility, it would nevertheless be of inestimable value to mankind, for it would still prove an instrument for annihilating, more or less gradually, the whole existing stock of variolous infection. But as there is reason to believe, that not more than one in several thousands retain their susceptibility to Small-pox after undergoing Vaccination, the objection vanishes to nothing. It is like a *lusus naturæ*, or like a red mark or wen on the face ; or it may be compared to those rare constitutions in which bark or mercury do not produce their usual specific effects, but which no wise man would, for this reason, decline employing in those diseases to which they are adapted. Rationally considered, it forms a most imperious additional motive for urging the Vaccine Inoculation, both with a view to overpower the effect of those anomalous cases, and to save the few who still retain their susceptibility. It is remarkable, that we have not heard that in other countries any objections have arisen to the practice, from the occurrence of failures. Either none such have occurred, or

they have had no effect in slackening exertions, nor in preventing the boundless success, which it has had, not only on the continent of Europe, but in all quarters of the globe, whether civilized or uncivilized.

This leads to remark, that whatever failures there may have been, they have not been such as to prove a bar to the ultimate accomplishment of the object in view ; so that now all argument respecting failures becomes irrelevant. The whole question is decided by it's being fully established, as a matter of fact, that the end proposed by Vaccine Inoculation, namely, the extirpation of Small-pox, has been actually achieved in various countries ; and that it may therefore be so in this country, whenever the same means of extending it shall be adopted.

Upon these grounds, every one will be prepared to form a judgment of the importance ascribable to the late failure of Vaccination in the family of Lord Grosvenor.*

In farther illustrating this subject, I cannot do better, than adopt what has lately appeared in a daily newspaper, in answer to a publication

* A son of his Lordship was attacked with the Small-pox to a severe and dangerous degree, after having been vaccinated several years, and there is every reason to believe that the child had the genuine Cow-pox, for he had been inoculated by Dr. Jenner himself.

of this incident, and an invitation to account for it. The following letter to the Editor of the Morning Post appeared in that paper of the 28th of June last :

“ SIR,

“ In answer to your liberal offer of inserting in your paper such explanation as may be offered of the occurrence of Small-pox after Vaccination, in the family of LORD GROSVENOR, a professional person, who saw this case, begs to assure the Public, through you, that the circumstances stated in your paper of the 26th are quite correct, and to offer the following explanation and comment on that incident :

“ 1st. The great surprise and alarm which it has excited, have been owing to the extreme infrequency of such an event, and from it's having happened in a family of distinction. Unless Vaccination were a general security, such an event, so far from being rare, would occur daily and hourly, and could excite no surprise.

“ 2dly. It is not denied, by the candid and enlightened favourers of Vaccination, that this accident may not happen in one case out of a great many, just as the Small-pox itself may be caught twice by one constitution in many thousands.

“ 3dly. As it is fully established, on the evidence of authentic and incontestable facts, that Vaccination has actually extirpated Small-pox in several parts of the world, it follows, that, notwithstanding a very few constitutions retain their susceptibility to Small-pox, there is a sufficient degree of preventive virtue in the Cow-pox to render it an instrument fully adequate to the extinction of the other, which is the ultimate boon proposed to be conferred on mankind by this discovery.

“ 4thly. It follows further, from the same premises, that the accident in Lord Grosvenor’s family, and a few others of the like nature, ought to operate as an incitement to push Vaccination to the utmost, as speedily as possible, so as to overwhelm the Small-pox, and utterly annihilate it, as has been done in other countries.

“ 5thly. It is manifest, on the same principles, that the persons to blame on this occasion, are those who, from ignorance, obstinacy, or worse motives, decry Vaccination; which, had it been practised in it’s full extent, this accident to Lord Grosvenor’s son could not have happened.

“ 6thly. Of those few cases of Small-pox, which have occurred after Vaccination, (I mean really occurred, for not one tenth of the reported cases have, upon investigation, turned out to be true,) none have been alleged to prove fatal, having all, as far as is known, been slight, except this case in Lord Grosvenor’s family, which, however, has also recovered.

“ Lastly. The Writer of this begs to put it to the world at large, Whether they can persuade themselves, that the whole liberal and enlightened part of the Mc-

dical Profession would, on slight grounds, have declared themselves, in opposition to their private interest, so far convinced of the preventive virtue of Cow-pox, as to deem themselves bound, in duty and conscience, to recommend it's universal adoption, as a means of saving human life, and of sparing human anguish, far superior to any thing which the ingenuity of man had before discovered? in all which they have been fully justified by the actual blessings which it has diffused, especially in those parts of the world where they have had the wisdom to adopt it in it's full extent."

In answer to this, a letter appeared next day in the same paper, questioning whether Small-pox could be caught a second time, and also the fact of Small-pox having been any where extirpated by means of Vaccination; asking, likewise, how it could be proved, that if Vaccination had been pushed to the utmost, Lord Grosvenor's son would have escaped?

To this the following reply was made :

" TO THE EDITOR OF THE MORNING POST.

" SIR,

" The public are greatly obliged to you for your ready insertion of whatever relates to Vaccination (a subject so important to society), and I cheerfully furnish you with the

further elucidation you require, in consequence of some difficulties started by your Correspondent. He very properly demands the proofs of Vaccine Inoculation being capable of extirpating Small-pox; for this is not only the most important question, but the whole question. Besides the innumerable reports of the salutary effects of this practice in every quarter of the globe, the following instances may be specified:—From a report made by Dr. SACCO, Superintendant General of Vaccination in Lombardy, dated Trieste, January 3, 1808, it appears that the Small-pox had entirely disappeared in all the large towns in that country, and that in the great city of Milan this disease has not been seen for several years. Dr. ODIER, of Geneva, testifies, that after a vigorous perseverance in the practice for six years, the Small-pox had disappeared in this district; and that when it had been casually introduced by strangers, it did not spread, the whole population being unsusceptible. There is no place where it was received with greater prejudice and reluctance than at Vienna; but, as soon as their doubts were dispelled by the light of evidence, there is no place where it has been adopted with more eagerness and success. The Small-pox was a disease held in peculiar horror in that capital, on account of its great and tragical fatality in the Impe-

rial Family, as every one knows who has read the interesting narrative of Mr. WRAXALL. The annual mortality there from this disease, before the introduction of Vaccination, was at an average 835. It appears from the Report of the Vaccinators, that in 1801, the mortality had fallen to 164; in 1802, to 81; in 1803, to 27; in 1804, to 2, and these two did not belong to the city. The interruption of intelligence since that time has prevented any regular reports from being transmitted; but it appears in a letter from Dr. CARRO, principal Inoculator there, to Dr. MAREET, of London, dated January 18, 1808, that for the last two years and a half there had not occurred even a single instance of Small-pox. The report* made to the Central Committee at Paris, is full of the most authentic proofs of the great and general diminution of mortality from Small-pox. At Aigurande the Small-pox had not been seen for two years. It has been extinguished at Lyons. In the principality of Bayreuth, in 1800, immediately before the introduction of Vaccination, the annual mortality from Small-pox amounted to 2843. In 1806 it was reduced to 126. Dr. Christie, lately returned from Ceylon, brings with him the most unquestionable testimony of the total

* Rapport sur les Vaccinations pratiquées en France en 1806 et 1807. Paris, 1809.

extinction of Small-pox there, in a very curious, interesting, and learned article* inserted in the last Medical Journal of Edinburgh, p. 288.† If all the testimonies in favour of Vaccination, equally convincing as these, were to be recited, the whole columns of your paper would not contain them.

“ Can any one seriously doubt, that if Inoculation had been pursued with the same energy in London as in Vienna and Milan, that the Small-pox would not have been several years ago totally annihilated? The advantages, however, have not been inconsiderable. Upon inspecting a series of the Bills of Mortality, I find, that, before the introduction of Vaccination, the annual deaths from Small-pox frequently exceeded 3000, but in other years they fell under 2000; so that the average was not much above 2000. The greatest mortality in one year is

* Since this was first written, Dr. Christie's publication has appeared, as a separate work.

† Since the manuscript of this tract was sent to the press, the author was called to visit Don Francisco de Salazar, who arrived a few days ago in London on his route from Lima to Cadiz, as a deputy to the Spanish Cortes. He reports, that Vaccination has been practised with so much energy and success in the former city, that for the last twelve months there had occurred not only no death, but no case of Small-pox, and that the new-born children of all ranks are carried to the vaccinating house as regularly as to the font of baptism; that the Small-pox is entirely extinguished in Peru, and nearly so in Chili; and that there is no compulsory interference of Government to promote this practice.

that of 1763, when it amounted to 3582. One of the lowest is that of 1751, in which it amounted to 998. But the mortality the following year was 3500. Ever since the practice of Vaccination, the mortality has been greatly below the average. In 1804, it was as low as 622. In consequence of various mischievous publications,* it has again risen to near 1200, for it appears by the Bill of last year, that the number of deaths from Small-pox was 1198.

“ We have the satisfaction of finding that various other parts of this island have shown more wisdom than the metropolis; and one of the most distinct instances of this, is a statement lately published at Glasgow; from which it appears, that in the year 1798, the year before the introduction of Vaccination, the mortality from Small-pox was 231; from which time it has gradually diminished, so that in the year 1810 the mortality was only 23, and these oc-

* These publications have not been the sole cause; something is imputable to the imbecility and perverseness of individuals out of the profession. In 1805 the mortality of Small-pox amounted to 1685. This increase was probably owing chiefly to the practice at that time of permitting inoculation of out-patients for Small-pox, at the Small-pox Hospital. The tendency of this to spread infection is obvious. It was prohibited, it is true, but it excites no small degree of astonishment and indignation that it should have been permitted in the state of knowledge in 1805.

curred among the indigent inhabitants, who had emigrated from the Highlands and from Ireland.

“ As the whole question evidently turns upon the proofs of the extirpating power of Vaccination, all subordinate questions are merely nugatory, and foreign to the subject; but I shall advert to the other difficulties of your Correspondent, if you think it worth while to insert my answers. He expresses a doubt, whether the Small-pox can be taken twice. There are many well attested instances of this in the various public Journals.* One of the most striking is that recorded in the 4th Vol. of the Memoirs of the Medical Society, which occurred in the case of RICHARD LANGFORD, a farmer, at West Shefford, near Newbury, in Berkshire, who had it twice of the confluent kind, and died of the second attack.† A brother of Sir W. ROWLEY has, within these few weeks, been attacked a second time with Small-pox, after having been inoculated with it. A similar case may be seen at this moment, at No. 10, Cross-street, Carnaby-market. The Rev. Mr. MAY, of Leigh, near Tunbridge, a respectable Clergyman, now alive, had the Small-pox a second time to a most violent degree.

* “ Medical and Physical Journal,” Vol. V. p. 403; and Vol. XV. p. 433.

† An attestation of this is inserted in the Parish Register of W. Shefford.

“ Your Correspondent asks, What proof there is that Lord GROSVENOR's son would not have caught the Small-pox, if the Cow-pox Inoculation had been carried to it's utmost extent? It is almost an insult to the understanding of your readers to answer this question; for it must be self-evident to them, that if Vaccination had been practised in this capital, as it has been in Vienna and Milan, there could no infection have existed, from which this youth, or any one else, could by any possibility have caught it.

“ To conclude.—When we gravely compare the advantages which we have missed, with those which our mortal Foe on the Continent has gained by this discovery; when we reflect what an inferior population we possess, to contend with him in the present dreadful and doubtful struggle; when to this is added the sentiments of commiseration for suffering and afflicted humanity, and the considerations of national disgrace incurred by our blindness and prejudice, every benevolent, reflecting, and patriotic mind, must feel animated by innumerable incentives and virtuous motives to lend his utmost aid to save the coming generation, and to redeem the national character.”*

* Professor Nemnich, of Tubbingen, in Wirtemberg, author of a Polyglot dictionary, and one of the most enlightened men in Europe, made a tour in England a few years ago; an account

Your Correspondent concludes by remarking, that there is still something regarding Vaccina-

of which he published in the German language. After exhibiting statements of the finances, commerce, population, manufactures, and manners of this country, he concludes his work with a chapter entitled, "Peculiarities of the English Nation," which he enumerates to be, horse-racing, bull-baiting, cock-fighting, boxing, and quackery. He introduces this last article in the following sententious manner: "England is the Paradise of "Quacks;" and he says, no adventurers in this line had been so fortunate as his countrymen, for that persons whom they had known in Germany as valets, hair-dressers, grooms, and shoemakers, were in the receipt of better incomes, from the sale of nostrums and the practice of physie, than many of the native Physicians of the best education and qualifications; that the capriciousness and credulity of the English nation, in their estimate of medical merit, abated somewhat of his respect for them, and inclined him to retract part of the panegyric which he had passed upon them in the previous part of his work. This learned stranger would, on the present occasion, naturally exclaim, Country of Newton, Addison, and Harvey! will you suffer yourselves to be swayed and guided in your vital interests by writings not only destitute of all pretensions to taste, learning, and science, but the greater part of them consisting of low ribaldry and disgusting buffoonery? Let not the Continent, however, consider these as fair specimens of professional English literature; for the medical men of this country, of real eminence and character, are persons of liberal sentiments and attainments, and, to a man, the friends of Vaccination. If the English Nation do not soon open their eyes, and act up to the benevolent feelings of our nature, will other Nations concede to them their pretensions to superior intelligence, patriotism, and humanity? or with what face will that Nation any longer arrogate to themselves the attribute of *good sense*, which they are sometimes pleased to subjoin to their name.

tion not understood. In answer, I repeat, that there is every thing understood that is necessary; namely, that Vaccination actually extirpates Small-pox from whole Nations; a fact which supersedes all reasonings, and puts an end to all farther cavils and doubts on this question, one of the most important to human society that has ever been agitated.

THE END.





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Author [Blane, G.]:

A serious address..

..1811.

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